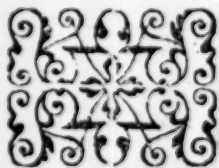


A
SERMON ON
the Parable of the
Sower, taken out of the
13. of Mathew.

PREACHED AT
London by M. G. Gifford,
and published at the re-
quest of sundrie godly
and well disposed
persons.



Printed by Robert
Walde-grave, for Tobie
Cooke, at the Tigres head
in Pauls Churchyard.

So the right
most high and mighty
John of the most
Blessed Trinity
and most high and mighty



T



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TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

M. John Hutton Esquier, George Gifford wth

sheth health and increase of

wotship.



IT is more then halfe a
yeare (Right worshipfull)
since I handeled this Pa-
rable of the Sower, in a
Sermon at London. Be-
ing instantly vrged by a
friend whiche hearde mee, to put it in
writing, although I was very vnwilling;
for fundrie considerations, yet I made
some promise if leasure should serue. Af-
terward when I would very gladly haue
ben releasd at her hands whome I pro-
mised, I coulde by no meanes obtaine it.
I haue therefore at the laste so nigh as I
could, set downe in writing, that whiche
I then vttered in speaking, I knowe that
I haue omitted some thinges in the par-
ticular applications, and exhortations
which I made: & also I haue added some-
what whiche eyther then came not to
minde, or else time did not serue to han-
dle. I am bolde to present and dedicate
this my poore trauell vnto your wor-
ship, moued thereto with diuers respects
as thinking my selfe in ductie bounde;

Aij.

not

*Given first to the Right Worshipful
George Gifford Esquier. by the
Author. the 10th of June. 1590.*

The Epistle Dedicatorie.

not onely with this common and generall bonde that ye are one whiche long time haue professed the glorious Gospell of Iesus Christe : but with diuers more speciall, whiche are so well known vnto you, that it were needelesse for mee to recite them: only thus much, seeing I was borne & brought vp vnder you, my parents receiuing benefites daily from you, I thinke I ought, when as I am not able to make any recompence, at least to shew some token of a gratefull minde. But especially I am moued herevnto, with consideration of the greatest blessing whiche all my kinred haue enioyed by you now so long, in prouiding and procuring their spirituall instruction. I pray you accept of my good will, and account of mee as one that prayeth to the Lorde for you, that he will multiplie & increase his good giftes still in you, to the glorie of his holy name, the benefite of his Church, and your endlesse comforte in Iesus Christ. Amen.

Yours for euer to command in the Lord,

George Gifford,

¶ A SERMON VPON THE Parable of the Sower.

Mat. 13.

- 1 **I**N that day Iesus wente out of the house and fate by the Sea side.
 - 2 And there was gathered vnto him a multitude, so that he entred into a ship, & fate downe, and the whole multitude stood on the shoare.
 - 3 And he spake many things vnto them by Parables, saying: Beholde a Sower went forth to sowe.
 - 4 And as he sowed, some feedes fell by the way side: and the foules came and eate them vp.
 - 5 Other fell vpon stonie ground, where they had not much earth, and by & by they sprang vp, because they had not depth of earth.
 - 6 And when the Sun rose they were parched, and because they had no roote they withered.
 - 7 Other fell amonge thornes, and the thornes grew vp and choked it.
 - 8 Other fell into good grounde, and brought forth fruite, one seed an hundred fold, another sixty, another thirtie.
- A.iii.
- 9 He

A Sermon on the

9 Hee that hath cares to heare , let him heare.



Although the Iewes , at
 suche time as our Savi-
 our Chziste came into the
 worlde, had the woorde of
 God among them: and had
 also the temple and Sina-
 gogues where they heard y^e same reade &
 expounded: yet their state was very mi-
 serable, for Chzist saith, they wer as shep
 without a shepheard : because their tea-
 chers, y^e Scribes & Pharesies, being choa-
 ked with couetousnesse, & puffed vp with
 vaine glozie, were become stark naught,
 corrupt in manners, and corrupting the
 word with their sond gloses: their teach-
 ing also was so cold, & with so little pow-
 er even in y^e which they taught truely, y^e
 the people had no great lisse to heare the.
 But when Iohn Baptist the forerunner
 of Chzist , was raised vp to publishe the
 beginning of the Gospell, & to prepare y^e
 way for y^e Lorde: he like a soulding and
 shrill Trumpet , with the power of his
 word shooke their hearts, & rolved their
 drowsines, so y^e fro his time y^e kingdome
 of

Parable of the Sower.

of heaven suffered violence. When Christ
Jesus himselfe uttered his voice in pre-
aching, and his diuine power in working
wonders, ther appered such a wonderfull
maiestie in his person, as did amaze the
hearers: wherbypon his fame was noysed
far and nere, so y they came running out
of all quarters of y land by heapes, for to
see & heare him, they seemed to forget the-
selues & their state, in leaning at world-
ly affaires, as y husbandmē their plough,
y Artificers their craftes & sciences, fol-
lowing him into y wildernes with their
wiues & their childzen laggering at their
heelles, so great was their zeale. So that,
as befoze almoste all did perisbe in y mi-
serable state they were in: now it seemed
y the greatest part, or at lest an innume-
rable multitude did with suche care im-
brace y heuenly doctrine, as y they shuld
be most happy & come to eternall life: but
this was other wise, for our sauioz Christ
sheweth here, y of this gret heap & rable
mēt of people, y were so zealous, and tra-
uelled so far to heare him, ther wer thre
parts which did not profit by his doctrine
but cōtinued still damned & forlozne cre-

A Sermon on the

tures, onely one parte of foure, are true schollers. And because we be ranke hypocrites, prone & redie to deceiue our selues, Christ Iesus layeth open the matter so plainly, & in so familiar a kinde of teaching, y^e hyles we wilfully blind our selues we cannot but see how the case standeth in euery of vs, each man in himselte: for hee taketh a similitude from a sower of corne, which going and casting his seed abroad, it lighteth vpon sundrie kindes of ground, some falleth by y^e waye side, where the path is trampled & beaten smooth, & hard by mens feet, & is made like a pavement. & there it lyeth aboue y^e ground altogether vncouered, the fowles come by and by and picke it vp.

Some falleth into stony ground or rocke, or as S. Luke saith vpon a rocke: where there is a little thin crust of earth in y^e top, and some moysture in which the seed is a little couered: & because y^e earth which doeth couer it is but shallowe, it springeth vp quickly & brancheth, and is fresh & greene, & being so good, seemeth to be forward corne, & such as would yelde to the husbandman a plentifull haruest:

but

Parable of the Sower.

but because the roote cannot spreade it
selfe deepe inough to sucke iuyce out of
the grounde for the nourishment of the
blade, when the parchinge heate of the
Sunne lighteth vppon it, then it is dry-
ed vp, and scorched, and dyeth, and neuer
bryngeth forth fruite. Some other doeth
fall amonge thornes: there is deapth of
earth for the seede to growe, so that yt
springeth vp, and not onely a blade, but
also a stalke, and commeth so farre as to
haue the eare: but the thornes growe
vp with it, ouershadowe and choake it,
in somuch that the Corne in the eare, can
not haue the benefit of y Sunne to make
it ripe: therefore the fruite that it see-
meth to brynge forth commeth to naught.
Some other sēdes fall into good ground,
and grow vp, and brynge forth seasona-
ble fruite, one karnell an hundred, ano-
ther sixtie, another thirtie. This is the
Parable. Nowe for the meaning of it,
wee are not to seeke farre, neither to goe
by coniectures, for Chyriste himselfe doeth
expound and interprete euerie parte of it
a litle after in this Chapter: I neede not
but to lay open his Exposition.

A. v.

The

A Sermon on the

The seede is the worde of God: the sower of it is the preacher and publysher of the same: for as the sower doth fill his hand and so casteth it abroad vppon the ground, not setting it seede by seede, nor choosing a place for euerie seede, but where it lighteth: euen so the preacher doth cast forth the worde among the people, and looke howe the ground is into which it falleth, so doeth it prosper: for your hearts are the ground vppon which it is caste: you that are the hearers and amonge whome the seede is sown, haue euerie one a hearte which is one of these foure sortes of ground, vppon which the seed falleth: and because the seed hath bene & is still daily sown among ye, I thinke this parcell of Scripture is verie fit and agreable, euen as a touchstone for euerie one to tris himselfe withall, whether he haue rightly embraced the Gospell, and so his saluation: for what a sottishnesse were this, when we haue so iust & plaine a rule, not to measure our selues with it. But goyng on, on, nothings consider whether wee bee not one of those three euill sortes of ground, which receiue the seed,

seed,

Parable of the Sower.

seede, but bring forth no fruite, thinking
wee be well if we p[ro]fesse the Gospell o[er]
heare it, after anye sorte. Let vs goe fo[r]-
warde: those which receyue the seed by
the waye side, are they which heare the
wo[r]de and doe not vnderstand it, then
commeth the euill one, o[er] as Saint Luke
saith, the Diuell, and taketh it awaye
from their hearte. In these firste kinde of
hearers, wee haue to obserue, howe that
their heartes being hard and smooth lyke
a path that is trampled and beaten with
mens feet the wo[r]d hath no entrance, but
lyeth aboue vncouered: for like as when
a man casteth an handfull of corne vpon
a very hard & smooth path, it is all one as
if it were caste vpon a pavement: so also
throug[h] h[is] custom and deceitfulness of sin-
ning h[is] diuel hath made the harts of these
vnniue[rs]e to receiue the heauenly seed of the
wo[r]d: & loke howe ye see Crows and other
soules follow the heeles of the Sower, to
pick vp and deuoure such karnels as doe
ly vncouered: in like maner do the diuels
come like greedy soules into the assemb-
lies, where the wo[r]d of God is p[re]ached,
to take it awaye from the heartes of the
peoplz

*The Sower is a path
the Sower is a path
the Sower is a path*

A Sermon on the

people, that it may not grow there. This peradventure will seeme straunge to some, that Satan shoulde haue anye entraunce into the Church amonge Gods people, especially when they be about the beste and moste holy exercises of hearing the worde and of prayer. Howe straunge soeuer it may seeme, and howe manye soeuer haue beene, or be of y^e sonde and docturish opinion, to thinke that the Diuell hath nothinge to doe with them, or cometh not neere them, when they bee about these holye thinges: wee are to beleue Christ who telleth vs the contrary: and we are wisely to consider, that when we are nighest that which should do our soules good, then is this enemye readiest at hande, and doeth moste busely bestirre him. If this were not vttered by oure Saviour Christ himselfe, we might wonder, and for mine owne parte I woulde not cease wondering to see manye hearers which carrie away almost nothing, which is to any purpose: let a man tell a longe storie in a worldly matter, they haue wit inough to recite it in order againe, and to keepe it in remembrance

Parable of the Sower.

a long time after : but let the Preacher
speake neuer so plaine, although they sit
and looke him in the face, yet if ye en-
quire of them so soone as they be out at
the Church doores, ye shal easily perceiue
that (as the common saying is) it went
in at the one eare, and out at the other.
They will say peradventure, after this
manner, it was a good Sermon, I wold
we could follow it, he saide very well:
hee is a perfect ready man in the Pul-
pet. But aske, what doctrine did he han-
dle? Then are they at a pause, and set
at a dead list. They will make this an-
swere: we are not able to carry away
so much as other can, neuerthelesse we
hope that we be as good folowd God, as
they that carry away more. They will
also confesse that the worde of God is
good, and that we shoulde be ruled by it.
Let vs therefore dearely beloued, (if we
desire not to be of the number of these)
marke well the subtil sleights, and pos-
slicie of the Diuel, how he handleth and
conueyeth the matter with this kinde of
people. There is no doubt of this, but
that if he can he will draw away the
minde

A Sermon on the

minde from comming to the Sermon,
one pelting lette or other muste come in
the waye : if there be no worldly busi-
nesse to be done : then a paire of cardes
or tables or some honest recreation, it
should be no we no good ciuilitie to parte
companye when friendes are met toge-
ther, this is the surest waye if it maye
be obtained : but what if he faile here-
in? They come to the place where the
seede shalbe sowen, sit down, and minde
to heare : then the next way is to come
with them, and to attende at their elbowe,
seeking how to depriue them of the word.
Nowe his best way is to bring them as
leepe because they were then as good bee
absent: or into a slumber, that they maye
heare onely a sound and a confused hum-
ming, without any persenerance of the
things vttered: or els when they heare
any perfect sentence, or a few sentences,
they know not why they be vttered, be-
cause they heard not that which went be-
fore. Such as are not so drouisie headed,
being wakefull, he seeketh still to conuey
some thoughtes into their minds, where
aboutes they may be occupied, and their

wh

Parable of the Sower.

vnderstanding drawen away: the minde of a man beeing light and inconstant, if he can put in but one motion, it oftentimes draweth with it so manye linkes as make vp a whole chaine, in the meane time the Preacher goeth on, and he vnderstandeth not what was saide, and so when his mind returneth, he can haue no sound knowledge of the thinges vttered, but a confused opinion: into these by thoughtes, men are oftentimes brought, even by occasion of some worde or sentence which they heard vttered, and are caried so far, y they cannot of long time reconer their minde to bring it againe to the matter. Seeing this great danger, we ought when we come to heare Gods word taught, to make account that we goe about a very hard worke, y we goe to encounter wth satan hand to hand, who seeketh then most busily to steal away our hart: y he may make y word fruitles in vs, and cause vs to sinne greuously against God. There is no one man which maketh conscience of hearing the word rightly, which setting these things together, the reuerence we owe vnto it, y steadines of our minde, which

A Sermon on the

which should be vpon it, and the care to keepe it, but will easily graunt that it is as hard and painfull a traue'l to do this, as for the man that woꝛketh in the sorest bodily labour. Here is therefore a lesson for euery man to apply to himself when he is going to heare the woꝛde, to thinke I am now going about a great woꝛke, I shall be too weake if the Lord God do not mightely assiste mee: for I am not to sit downe there at ease, but to wrastle and struggle with the Diuell, & with all the corruptions of mine owne flesh, and hardnesse of my heart: that my minde maye be kept stedfast vpon the woꝛde, that I may receiue it with all reuerence & feare, as the woꝛde of the great and glorious God: not to iudge of it at mine own pleasure, but to traue wiseboine from the Loyde: not to heare it and to let it go, but to kepe it as a most precious Jewell locked vp in my heart, that I may guide my selfe thereby. And we shall be a great deale the rather moued to this diligence, if we consider what a companion we carie about with vs, and what a guest we lodge withall

Parable of the Sower.

withall, when we be such as heare the word, and doe not keepe it. For Christe telleth vs that it is the diuell which doeth this: whiche as a greedy fowle deuoureth the sēde which was sown in our hearte: if any make none account to haue him possessing their minde, & hardening their hearts against the word: then let them continue in their sloth to heare with drowisie minds, to heare & not to vnderstand: to regarde the holy word, but as the word of a man: to make little account to keepe it. But if he thinke it a most miserable thing to haue so filthy a beast, and so foule a spirit to lodge in his breast: if he thinke it to be a most vile slavery, to be vanquished & overcome of so horrible an enemy, to be lead captiue & kept thralld vnder such a tyrant: then let him thinke also howe miserable a thing it is to be such a kind of ground as dooth receiue the sēde by the way side: for vndoubtedly howsoener men seeme to defy the diuell, and curse him as though he should not come nigh them, yet seeing it is no mortall man but the Lorde Iesus Christe himself, who telleth vs here that

A Sermon on the

the diuel is not onely nigh, but in these kinde of hearers, euen hardening their heartes, & blinding their eyes, we ought most constantly to beleue it. Ye that shal deeply weigh þe estate of our church at this day, will sone be brought to confesse, that there be many of this first sort of hearers, they shal perceiue it right well by this, that they are not able in any wise to iudge oꝝ put difference betwene sound and sincere preaching, and vaine prating: they know not when the preacher doth minister vnto the wholesome soode, & when there is nothing but chaffe & winde: ye shal heare them highly commend some Sermon, as a matter woꝛthy to be wꝛitten in letters of gold, whẽ as in deed it deserueth not so much as to be noted with a coale. I speake not of those sly wꝛetches, which were neuer as yet acquainted with preaching, soꝝ it is no great maruell, though they be not able to discerne chalke from cheese: oꝝ being blind soꝝ to iudge of colours, but to such as long time haue ben hearers, & yet neuer the wiser, bicause they are not able to iudge when sound and necessary
con,

Parable of the Sower.

conclusions are drawne out of þ̄ woꝝde;
but is al one with them, whether þ̄ rea-
son that is made be good oꝝ bad, strong
oꝝ weake: yea further ye shal perceiue þ̄
euē a little shew of a reason although
neuer so doltish, being against true god-
linesse, doth moꝝe pꝛeuaille with them,
then a multitude of infallible pꝛoꝝs, al-
though they be neuer so sure: and that
which is so grose and absurd that a child
may laugh at, seemeth to them a verge
strong pillar to leane to. There needeth
no moꝝe when a man pꝛeacheth vnto
them, but a glorious shew of learning, a
sweet ringing voice, & maters so strange
and straungely handeled, þ̄ they may be
brought into a wonderment of that they
know not. And Satan hath many chap-
laines fit foꝝ this turne, to serue þ̄ vaine
humoꝝ of such people, & to set foꝝth them-
selues after a pōpous soꝝt: moꝝe sēking
their owne vaine gloꝝy, then the gloꝝie
of the Gospell, in the conuersion of the
people. The second kinde of ground are
they which receiue the sēd vpon þ̄ harde
rock, wher there is some entrance, & the
woꝝd hath a shallow root in them, foꝝ as

A Sermon on the

it were the top of their heart is soft after a sort, and there it is covered a litle, & it groweth up quickly, and springeth fresh, they seeme to be stout and excellent professors, they brag of great zeale: a man would take them to be sincere, & so they take themselves: but when the Sun ariseth, that is, the fire trial or parching heat of persecution, they stumble & fall away, and because the word had no deepe roote in them, it withereth and bringeth forth no fruite: these also are not profited by the word of grace, but are still cast awayes and damned creatures: in this kinde of ground, or in these hearers, if we note well, we shall see that which is strange and wonderfull: when Christ sayth and testifieth of them, that they receiue the word with ioy: these be not blasphemers or persecutors of the word: they be not contemners whiche regarde not at all to heare it: they come not vnder a shewe or pretence as to a thing which otherwise they haue no care nor feeling of, or which they delight not so to heare, but how? They receiue it with ioy, & take such pleasure therein, that re-
tur-

'Parable of the Sower.'

turning they can saye, surely this was a
very notable peece of woork, & wel han-
deled, I am glad that I heard it, it doeth
mee euen as much good as my meate, I
would go a mile to heare the like again.
Is not this then merueylous and feare-
full, that a man maye goe thus far, & yet
be a cast away, and a sozlozne wretch: It
is not a thinge to bee wondered at, when
the holy scriptures giue sentence against
those traiterous villaines, which set the
selues against God, and treade down his
laws: but when God uttereth this sharpe
sentence against this zealous kinde of
men, if it cause vs not to woonder, yet it
may make vs to tremble, when we see y
a man may proceede thus far in religion
& yet be damned. When wee vnderstand
y a man may be zealous, & redy to heare
preaching, vnderstandeth, carrieth away,
letteth it grow in his hart, hath some ioy
in it, and yet neuer the better, abiding
still vnder the curse. But there be some
which will obiecte against me & say, this
is no good manner of teaching, for y vse
of true teaching, is to builde vp and edi-
fie y faith: but this seemeth to take away

A Sermon on the

the certeintie of faith from all, so that no man can tell whether hee shal bee saved: For by what meanes can a man make a better triall and p^{ro}ofe of his faith then this, that he giueth care to Gods worde, vnderstandeth it, carrieth it away, & ioyeth in it: If such a mā may bee damned, who maye not dispaire? I aunswere with S. Paule, 1. Cor. 10. 12. Hee that thinketh hee standeth, let him take hēde he do not fall. If the admonition were necessary to the Corinthians, it is necessary for vs all. One of that p^{ri}ncipal ends and bles of p^{re}aching, is to giue men warning that they do not deceiue thēselues with euery kind of faith or ioy in the woorde: but to looke for good and sound triall in them selues: which is not the waye to bringe men to dispaire, but to bringe them to true godlinesse: to cause them to shake of securitie and loosenesse in the seruice of God: to beware least their heartes bee harde still within: it causeth men to try themselves least they should bee deceyued by a vaine shadow of a dead and fruitlesse faith: for Christ sayeth, y these beleeeue (for so it is exp^{re}sse^d by S. Luke the 8. 13. (e ioye in the

Parable of the Sower.

the word, and yet are damned. When let
vs come to the particular applying of
this point: to see howe wee are to deale
with our selues, when ye receiue y^e word
take hede that ye giue it deapth of earth
inough, looke that your heart bee not soft
and pliable inough a little aboue, and a
hard rocke of stone within, but see that it
bee digged and softened to the bottome,
y^e the word may take roote deepe inough.
Alas, what a miserable thing is it, when
Christ hath giuen vs warning heere so
plainly, for a man to bee a zealous Gos-
peller, not onely willinge to heare, but
hath an earnest desire, and trauaileth to
heare, taketh pleasure & delight when he
heareth, yet neuertheles, because hee ta-
keth no heed thereto, his heart within is
so stonie, y^e hee heareth but to his further
increse of damnation. Canie think it go-
eth wel with them when as they receiue
this testimonie from men: hee is a sound
Protestant, he fauoureth & delighteth in
y^e truth, these indeed be great tokens of y^e
feare of god, but yet we are not to rest in
them: our chiefe dealing is betwene god
& our heart, & that in this thing whether

A Sermon on the

our heart be not harde and rockie. Those are a thousand times happie, which feelee melting heartes & soft affections, so that Gods woord doth pearse into them, and causeth them to tremble at the maiestye & power of the same: their tender heart both sigh and mourne for their iniquitie. As on y contrarie patt, they which make no conscience of sinne, but are hardened in their affections, although they seeme to bee in good case, yet are they cursed and miserable. Let euery man therefore that goeth from the Sermon, carrie this with him: I heare by Christs olone woords, y there is a stonie ground where the seede falleth: where it groweth but not deepe inough, it springeth vp but doth not bzing forth fruite, this is a wofull case, if I should be in the number of these for then all my labour is lost, whiche I bestowe in frequenting Sermons, yea, it were much better y I had neuer hearde: I saie that I ioye in it, I would not for any thinge but I had heard it: but Christ saith that the reprobate, some of them doe heare the woord with ioy, so that if I looke not narrowly to mine owne heart,

Parable of the Sower.

I may for all this be damned: therefore
 I muste not satisfie my selfe with this,
 but see that I couer the woorde deepe
 inough, that my heart be softened in such
 sorte, that I feele the roote goeth deepe,
 yea, so deepe, that it can neuer bee rooted
 out: And therefore let him continuallie
 crie vnto God and saye: O Lord make
 soft my harde and stony hearte, let it
 be a melting hearte, that thy holy worde
 maye growe in it for euer. I woulde to
 God, this doctrine of our Saviour
 Christ, mighte make euerye of vs to
 tremble and shake (as indeede if it were
 well weighed, it is so fearefull, that it
 mighte cause the haire of our heades to
 stand vp) for then would we not so loose-
 ly and securelie walke in the hardnes of
 our heartes, there would not bee so ma-
 ny backsliders in time of persecution:
 there would not bee so manye braue bo-
 asters and praters of Religion, who are
 readie to pull in their hoznes, and to hide
 their heades, so soone as there is anye
 feare of daunger, or lykelyhood of per-
 secution: neyther would men beare them-
 selues in hand, that they be iolly profes-

Now unto the Universall Church of Christ in England
 most Honorable and Wise Masters in Christ Jesus
 the Minister of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God
 in London and in the Diocese of London
 Thomas Hooker

A Sermon on the

so28, when they haue but a little tasted
of the wo2de, and are no moze but emp-
tie barrells, which giue a greate sounde.
Were then we be set a wo2k with great
toyle, to haue this same harde stonye
ground made losse, and fit to receiue this
heauenlye seede. And hee which is not
carefull in this poynt, to take paines, yee
shall see him ware so harde, that euen as
a continuall raine dropping vppon a
Rocke of stoue maketh it neuer the sof-
ter, so nothinge can make his heart to
relente. This may teach vs then to cease
maruelling, when we see so many which
willingly glue themselues to bee taught,
and haue still little remoyce of sinne.
The Lorde for his mercie sake make vs
wise and sharpe sighted to iudge of oure
selues: not to bee leade on forwarde in a
carnall profession; but to giue credite to
our heauenlye teacher, who hath heere
opened his holy mouth to instructe vs so
plainly, and befoze hand to warne vs
of the great daunger: that we may stirre
vp our selues, and be quickened in our
dull spirits, with all humble submission,
and bowing tolowe our neckes, to re-
ceiue

Parable of the Sower.

reine the doctrine of our Lorde, and to open our heartes in such sorte that hee may digge in them, and thruste in his spade to the bottome. For otherwyle, it cannot goe well with vs. If this were practised among vs, we should not haue so manie olde rustie Protestantes: which if a man talke with them from morning to night, they are able to continue speach in reciting stozies and places of Scripture, and will vtter matter against the doctrine of the Pope: but lette a man brge them with the doctrine of regeneration, and stande vpon the necessity of sincere Repentaunce, shewing them that they muste bee trulye humbled vnder the burthen of their sinnes, that they muste mortifie and subdue their carnall lusts: this is too hard a cruss for their old teeth. This matter doeth marre all: this doeth robbe them of their glorie: and therefore they canne not willingly abyde to heare of it. Let vs come nowe to the thirde kinde of ground, which receiucth the seed among the thorns: here is depth inough of earth: so y^e as the second sorte of hearers seemed to go far beyond the first,

so

A Sermon on the

so these seeme to goe farre beyond them,
and to come nigher to eternall life, for
here the word doth grow and hath roote
so deepe, that it springeth forth so farre,
that Christ saith, it groweth vp, and the
thornes grow vp with it, the stalke doth
shoote forth the eare, and lacketh but ri-
ping. For this may bee proued by Saint
Luke, who saith that they bee not (Te-
lesphorountes) that is, suche as beare
ripe and timely fruite: for these profes-
sors doe manie good woorkes, and seeme
to bringe forth the fruites of the Gospel:
and that in suche wise that men can not
alwayes discern them, but thinke their
deedes to be notable: but Christe Iesus
doth shew that their woorkes before God,
(who onely cannot bee deceyued) are as
Cozne which lacketh riping, which bee-
ing overshadowed with bushes, wither-
eth in the eare and commeth to naught:
this is a dangerous case if wee looke
not to it: That a man maye heare the
Gospell preached, carrie it away, bee mo-
ued thereby to doe manie good woorkes:
and yet bee damned. Hee is a thousande
folde madde therefore, which doeth not
looke

! Parable of the Sower,

looke to himselfe in this point : to trie
what soundnesse there is in the fruits of
his faith, and how sincerely hee doth im-
brace Gods worde. As befoze I saide,
that some would object and say, this will
destroy the faith, so am I sure that here
it will be saide much moze : because this
seemeth to take alway the surest triall of
faith : if a man may not by and by saye,
I haue good woꝝkes, therefore I haue
the true and liuely faith : I aunswere,
that whosoener hath any good woꝝke in
him, the same hath the true faith, which
hath bzought forth that good woꝝke, be-
cause it is impossible without faith to do
any good thing, oꝛ to haue any good mo-
tion oꝛ intent : but withall I saye, that
it is one thing to seeme good befoze men,
and another thing foꝛ to be good in deed
befoze God. In outward apperaunce,
there is little difference betweene the
good deeds of them which feare God sin-
cerely, and the vntimely fruite of world-
lings: but God whose eye doth not looke
vpon the outward shewe, but the inward
affection, seeth which proceedeth of faith,
and which doth proceede of vaine glozie,

A Sermon on the

oꝛ some other sinister respect, and putteth
as great difference betwene them, as he
did between y^e sacrifices of Cayne and A-
bel. We must take heed then, y^e the fruites
of our faith be ripe and timely, otherwise
they be good but in the w. We must come
then to see first what these thornes are: in
S. Matthew they are called, the cares of
this world and the deceitfulness of riches:
in S. Luke: the cares of riches, and plea-
sures of this life. And in very deed, these
thornes do grow together. For were it
not for the pleasures of this life, there
would be no cares of riches: he whiche
doth seeke greedily for wealth, it is ey-
ther because he woulde be able to haue
Inherewithall to fill the lusts of y^e flesh,
and to pamper his body delicately: oꝛ els
to set forth himself in pride, and to clyme
ambitiously to honour. For so long as a
man doeth take pleasure in any of these,
so long he is couetous & raketh together
so much, that as the common saying is,
he raketh vp the Diuell and all. What
must we do then? Our heartes are as a
ground that is ranke, and bringeth forth
many weeds: we are set a worke as God
spea

Parable of the Sower.

speaketh by his Prophete Jeremy. Chap.
4.4. Plow vp your falo w, and sow not a-
mong y thornes: we must put all diligēce
and care y our heartes may be rid of such
noisome weeds as will choke the word of
God, and make y it shall not bring forth
fruit in vs. So long as we suffer any of
these in vs, either to loue daintie and de-
licate feeding of our flesh, and to fill our
selues with the lusts therof, or to be gal-
lāt in y eies of men, and hautely to lift vp
ourselues in our vainglorious minds, and
for y maintenance of these delights bend
our care to the world: so long shall we be
unprofitable scholars in y school of Christ.
Alas poore men which wold faine come to
God, and yet are gladd to the world, they
offer one hand to Christ, and y other to y
diuel: they can talk of y spirit, and yet are
led by y flesh: y gospel is in their mouth,
and couetousnes lodgeth in their hearts:
their works glister and are grēne befoze
men and are withered befoze God: they
seme to be faithful and are faithles, to be
heires of glory, and yet are the childezen of
cōfusiō. Ther are great plēty of these bea-
rers, & specially in such places, wher ther

A Sermon on the

is wealth and honours : howe many fall
away choked with the worlde? And yet
we are not afraid of our selues to take
heede that we stand fast. A great mercy
of God it is that we haue not onely the
doctrine layde before vs, but also feareful
examples : so that we may buy our wiſe
with other mens cost. For when we see
the world with delightes and pleasures,
with couetousnesse and ambition, to car-
rie away those whiche proſeſſe the Gos-
pell, is not our owne matter in hande,
are not we made of the ſame mettall
they are, doth not the world assault vs as
it doth them? Yes, and we ſhalbe ouer-
come alſo, if the Lorde haue not mercie
vpon vs. The hardnesse of this worke,
ought not to diſcourage or make vs ſlack,
but hearing what Chriſt ſaith, whome
we ought to beleene, the more harde, the
more we are to ſtirre vp our ſelues, vn-
leſſe we make ſmall reckoning of the
ſaluation of our Soules. We ſhal peeld
and giue ouer the digging vp of theſe
thornes, becauſe he perceiueth they grow
deepe in his heart, and ſpring as faſt as
he can cut them : is not worthy to enter
into

Parable of the Sower.

Into life: hee which will not continually till and weede this ground, maye well haue the Gospell in some sorte soz to grow in him, but not to saue him. Dearely beloued wee muste bee surely perswaded of this, that as there be manie godly men, so they haue attained it with great labour and toyle, yea, they are still set a worke and cannot come to an ende, because these thornes cannot bee vtterlye rooted out.

Those are greatlye overseene which thinke it to be an easie thinge to professe Christ vnto saluation: and make no further accounte but to bee Gospellers, at ease: if they can vanquish in disputation, to thinke they haue wonne the field: no, no, they haue a hearte which is harde to ouercome: they haue thornes which will not easely be destroyed: here lieth the victorie and getting of the spurs: this man shall bee crowned because hee hath willinglye giuen vp himselfe to the power of Gods grace to purge his hearte, and to make roome soz the holie woode, that it may grow there alone, and not bee overshadowed and choaked.

C,

Nowe

A Sermon on the

Howe lette vs marke well that which is
sayde heere, both of the fronte and also
of the thornie ground, howe farre they
proceede in professing Christ, and imbrac-
ing his Gospell: and we shall plaine-
ly see, how greatlie those carnall Gospellers
whiche will not haue fayth to bee tryed
by the fruites, are deceiued: Faith, faith,
(say they) is that which doeth iustifie, it
is true indeede, but not a fruitlesse faith:
Whosoever beleaueth shall be saued: it is
euen so, but not after euerie kinde of be-
liefe: for then why should not these two
sorts of herers be saued, it is merueilous
when the Scripture is so euident, & our
Saniour Christ speaketh so plainly, that
this grosse and vltish error shoulde pos-
sesse the mindes of so manie. But indeede
it is a sweete doctrine, when a man maye
let loose the raines to all the lustes of the
fleshe, at the least thus farre, not to bere
& tormente himselfe in subduing them, &
yet by faith to be saued. When Heauen
& Hell meete together, and God and the
diuell be reconciled, then shall these flesh-
lie Epicures, and vaine proude men
come to their happinesse. When Christ
shall

Parable of the Sower.

shall denye that which hee hath heere
uttered, then shall these be true belee-
vers.

Let men therfore take heede that they
be not deceived, nor made slacke in look-
ing to the fruits of their faith and mortifi-
cation of vaine fleshly lusts, through &
prophane prattling of such worldly belly
Gods: beleeue not them, but beleeue Je-
sus Christ, who telleth you that it is not
enough to heare the word, & to receiue it
with ioy, & to let it growe in vs, vnlesse
it bring forth reasonable and timelye
fruit in vs.

Againe, let vs marke how strong and
invincible an Argument may be gather-
ed out of this text against all contem-
ners and despisers of the worde, such as
care not for hearing: these three sortes of
hearers, are before them, & nearer to chris-
tianity then they, and yet come short:
therfore it must needs follow, that such
ignorant Atheists, as neither know, nor
desire to knowe any thing above this
world, are very far from God, although
they would seeme with their mouth and
lips to draw nere unto him. For if this

A Sermon on the

matter were well obserued, men would not regarde nor haue those men in estimation to be good & honest, who are very dogs or swine, not regarding y^e precious pearle of the Gospel, but ready to bark & bite at those which bring it. Let a man inquire thus, not of a few, but of y^e greatest part of men, howe say ye to such a man, what thinke ye of him? he is (saye they) a very good man, a good naturd man, a gentle person, trusty to his friend, sure of his word, & doth keepe as good an house as any man of his calling in all this shire. But howe is he affected vnto Gods word: is he zealous in religiō? Nay surely, I did neuer heare y^e he did deale y^e way, he is a very quiet man, no medler at al. A notable honest man, as deuout in the laws of God as y^e horse whiche he rideth vpon, as careful to haue Gods glorie aduanced, as the swine in the stie, a great deale behinde these vnprofitable hearers, which are castawaies: & yet forsooth being very brut beasts before God (in y^e state they be in, yet vnlesse y^e Lord call them to bee zealous of his glorie) they must be reputed for the best men.

Our

Parable of the Sower.

Our fieldes are full of such Cattell as these, and if the Lord doe not put too his helping hand, our case is very miserable. Ifanie of those which were so zealous to heare, that they woulde to their hinderaunce in woꝛldlye matters leaue off their businesse, and folloꝝ preaching, as those which flocked to heare Christ, were yet neuer thelesse reiecte, because they did not sincerely as they shoulde: What shall we saye of those which will not step out at their doores, euen when they haue nothing to do, vnles it be to sit at cards or tables. If such a man maye be damned, as is moued with some delight, when he heareth the woꝛde preached: What shall we iudge of those wooden blockes and sottish men, who feele no more ioye in it then a post, when it is vttered vnto them? If ther be some go to destruction, which conforme themselves and haue a shew of fruite by the woꝛde: wher shall those wretches appeare, whom the holy woꝛd of God can not moue one whit, to reforme their disordered & beastly behauiours. I neede not to stand to inueigh out of this place against those

A Sermon on the

belhouſes, which dare open their mouths to reproch and ſlaunder the ſetting forth of the Goſpel. The Lorde diminith the number of them.

The laſt kinde of ground, are the good hearers, which do not onely receiue the ſeede, but alſo bring forth the fruits thereof. Although not euery one a like or in the ſame meaſure, for ſome bring forth an hundred fold, ſome fifty fold, ſome thirtie fold, according to the meaſure of Gods graces in them.

Although here be great ods in bringing forth the fruites, yet they be all accepted and accounted for good ground, true Chriſtians, and ſincere profeſſors of godlineſſe: now as we be taught here that it is required of all to be doers, as S. Iames ſaith, and not hearers only cha. 1. ver. 22. ſo are we alſo taught, not to deſpiſe or raſhly to condemne thoſe, which do not bring forth ſo great a meaſure of fruit as others do: True it is, as Chriſt ſaith, herein is my father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit. Iohn. 15. 8. But it is alſo as true which he ſaith in the ſecond verſe of the ſame chapter, Every

Parable of the Sower,

uerie bzaunch that bringeth forth fruite;
he purgeth, that it may bringe forth more
fruite. When to bring forth most, is moſte
of all to bee deſired, that God maye haue
the greateſt glozie: to bringe forth the
leaſt is not to bee condemned, becauſe
the Lord in time both purge the, & make
them more fruitfull. I neede not to ſtand
here for to handle manye thinges, or to
make large expoſition, the matter is ex-
ceeding plaine, there is no more but this,
that all our care in hearinge & profeſſing
the Goſpell, bee to receiue it into good
ground, and to bringe forth the fruites
thereof. What ſhould I ſtande to rip vp
the ſhamefull abuſe in the contrarie, to
vtter how manie euill fruites there be in
many which are Goſpellers. This ſhould
bee but as it were to light a candle in the
cleare Sun ſhine, for all men do ſee them.
I doe not ſpeake this as though it ſhould
not bee good to crie out againſt them: but
becauſe the former thinges which I haue
now vttered, doe fully diſcloſe them. And
therefore I will heere ende, deſiring the
Lord to write theſe things in our hearts,
which we haue heard with our outward

A Sermon on the

**eares, and to make vs good ground, to re-
ceiue y^e heavenly sēde, and to bring forth
fruites of the same, that glorifying him
in this world, we may be glorified
of him in the world to come,
through Iesus Christ
our Loꝛde.
Amen.**

FINIS.



